

AIR FORCE

CONFIDENTIAL

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

311955

EMBASSY, VIENNA

F780004-0040

390

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

October 20, 1955

DATE

Embdes #236, September 1, 1955, and previous

For Dept.	ACTION	DEPT.
Use Only	REC'D	OTHER
	10/27	OC 14

SUBJECT: American citizens detained by the Soviet Union

An elderly Austrian repatriate, Mrs. Ottilie Matzinger, who was arrested by the Soviets in Vienna in February 1946 for espionage and spent ten years in Soviet labor camps, recently wrote to the former U.S. Commanding General Vienna indicating that she had information concerning Americans held in various Soviet camps which she wished to give to American authorities. Mrs. Matzinger was interviewed this week by Embassy officers at the hospital where she is at the moment. In assessing the value of her report it should be noted that, after five years spent in Ravensbruck and, subsequently, ten years in Soviet camps, Mrs. Matzinger is extremely ill, greatly disturbed emotionally and, at times, was somewhat incoherent in her account. She was insistent, however, that she had known personally the following three Americans.

- (1) Col. DAVISON. He is from Ohio, about 48 years old, approximately six feet tall, wide shoulders, greying hair. Mrs. Matzinger first met him in a Soviet prison in the cellar of the building at Tolbuchkinstrasse 48, Vienna X. There she was confronted with Davison who was accused of espionage (specifically of "having taken photographs") and of having worked with Mrs. Matzinger. According to Mrs. Matzinger, the Soviet in charge of this prison was a Lt. Col. Dobrovolsky. The man who interrogated her was one Ivan Ivanovich Petrov. Davison's case was handled by a Col. Ponomarov of the Soviet Element of the Vienna Inter-Allied Command, and he was interrogated by a Major Orlov. Davison later told Mrs. Matzinger that in Vienna he had made the acquaintance of a Helena Leit. (According to Mrs. Matzinger, Leit was an Estonian citizen, about 30 years old, a dancer by profession who also worked as a Soviet agent in Vienna.) In February 1946 Leit invited Davison to tea at the Hotel Erzherzog Rainer in the IV (Soviet) Bezirk. Davison went to the hotel and was picked up there by an MVD patrol and taken to Tolbuchkinstrasse. Both Davison and Mrs. Matzinger apparently spent some months at Tolbuchkinstrasse before they were sentenced to 25 years imprisonment and sent to the Soviet Union. Mrs. Matzinger next met Davison at Vorkuta in 1947. When she left in 1950 Davison was ill in the camp hospital. In 1953 at Verkhni Uralsk two other Americans, Peterson and Oisman (see below) told her that they knew that in 1953 Davison was out of the hospital and still at Vorkuta.
- (2) Capt. PETERSON. According to Mrs. Matzinger he is from Cincinnati, Ohio. She said that she thought he was about 30 years old. He was connected in some way with Gen. Mark Clark's headquarters in Vienna when he was kidnapped by the

MJM McClellan/EFRivinus/bhm
REPORTER

CONFIDENTIAL

This copy has been designated
the RECORD COPY. It must be
retained in divisional files or destroy in accordance with security regulations.

611.61241/10-2055

Confidential PW

611.61241/10-2055

CONFIDENTIAL
(Classification)

F780000-0041

Soviets in Vienna, probably in 1946, and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for espionage. Mrs. Matsinger first met Peterson at Veridni-Uralak in 1953 and last saw him in May 1955 in Vladimr (Mrs. Matsinger's wording was "Vladimir Velynek prison").

- (3) Capt. Sing OISMAN. He is about 30 years old, was kidnapped by the Soviets in Vienna in 1949 and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for espionage. Mrs. Matsinger met him at Veridni-Uralak and last saw him there in September 1953. His mail address is Post Office Box 5110/49 Moscow.

Both Peterson and Oisman told Mrs. Matsinger that there were at that time 27 Americans being held in the Krasnoyarski Krai but did not give her any names.

Another Austrian returnee, Gustav Tasubler (Margaretenstrasse 138/28, Vienna V) came to the Embassy to give a report of an American whom he had known well during his five years in a labor camp in Karaganda, Kazakh SSR, Camp Spaask #9. The name of the American (spelled phonetically from Russian) is

Vincens WINELAITSCHUS. Winelaitschus, born in Lithuania, claimed to be an American citizen and to have an American passport. He had a father who had also been an American citizen, but who was now in Vilnos, Lithuania, and a brother whom he stated was "not an officer, but the highest soldier" in California. Tasubler could not remember the name of the city in California where Winelaitschus' brother was supposed to be stationed and had had to tear up the address along with other papers in the assembly and processing camp in Moscow. Tasubler reported that Winelaitschus had been picked up somewhere in one of the Satellite countries presumably just at the close of the war and sentenced to ten years for espionage, five of which he served in the coal mines at Karaganda. He completed his sentence in February 1955 and was released from Camp Spaask #9, but restricted to an area bounded by a radius of five kilometers in Karaganda. Tasubler saw him several times subsequent to his release from the camp and reported that Winelaitschus was working for the Government Geological Institute in Karaganda. He described Winelaitschus as being about 28 years old, always in good health and strong as an ex. Winelaitschus frequently received packages from his father in Vilnos during the time he was in the camp. He gave Tasubler the address of his brother, however, and begged him upon his release to report the presence of Winelaitschus in Karaganda to any American official whom he could contact.

A source, considered fairly reliable, who recently returned from several years in Soviet labor camps has given another report on

Mela HIRSCHFIELD, Soviet wife of Louis Hirschfield, former staff member of Embassy Moscow, who disappeared in 1951. (Embassy despatch #693, December 20, 1954.) The source in this case gave her name as "Mella Harschfeld" and identified her as "the wife of an American Embassy employee in Moscow." She was seen in Lubyanka prison between October 1951 and February 1952.

CONFIDENTIAL

Page _____ of _____
Encl. No. _____
Disp. No. _____
From _____

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 3 of _____
Disp. No. 390
From Ambassy, Vienna

F780000-0042

Austrian police officials are continuing their interrogation of Austrian returnees from the Soviet Union and are willing to make inquiries should this be desired on specific cases. With the departure from Austria of U.S. occupation forces it is no longer possible for the Embassy to check whether individuals such as Davison, Peterson and Olman were members of the United States Forces in Austria. If the Department wishes the Embassy to ask that Austrian police officials endeavor to obtain further information, it would be appreciated if any pertinent data concerning them which is in the records of the Department and/or the Department of the Army were made available to the Embassy.

J. K. Penfield
James K. Penfield
Charge d'Affaires, a.i.

Copies to:

Moscow

Bonn

Berlin

CONFIDENTIAL